

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Currently amended) A device for detecting and identifying ~~the characterization~~ of microorganisms comprising a porous body having regions of differing pore size, said regions being associated with different chromogens specific to enzymes produced by microorganisms.
2. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 1 wherein the porous body comprises membranes impregnated with chromogens.
3. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 1 in which the porous body comprises a plurality of membranes having differing pore sizes.
4. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 3 wherein the pore sizes vary from 0.6 μ m to 3.5 μ m.
5. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 2 wherein the membranes are cellulose membranes.

6. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 2 in which the chromogens are specific to different enzymes.
7. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 2 in which the chromogens impart a characteristic color to different bacterial colonies.
8. (Currently amended) The device of claim 2 wherein the chromogens comprise a chromogenic substrate selected from the group consisting of ~~that is chosen from~~ Indoxyl butyrate, Indoxyl glucoside, Esculin, Magenta glucoside, Red- β -glucuronide, 2-methoxy-4-(2-nitrovinyl) phenyl β -D-glucopyranoside (MNP-glc), 2-methoxy-4-(2-nitrovinyl) phenyl β -D-2-acetamido-2-deoxyglucopyranoside (MNP-glcNAc), 5-Bromo-4-Chloro-3-Indoxyl-beta-D-Glucuronide, Cyclohexylammonium Salt (X-Glc), and ~~or~~ 5-Bromo-4-Chloro-3-indoyl-beta-D-Galactopyranoside (X-gal).
9. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 1 wherein the porous body further comprises a phosphate buffer.
10. (Currently amended) The device of claim 1 wherein the porous body further comprises Isopropyl- β -D-thiogalactopyranoside IPTG.
11. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 1 wherein the porous body further comprises Mg^{2+} ions.

12. (Currently amended) The device of claim 2 wherein the membranes are presented in a layered arrangement, with an uppermost layer comprising a sample application pad of a rapid adsorption pad ~~903-membrane~~ impregnated with a phosphate buffer, subsequent regions are in the form of layers having pore sizes of 3.0 μ m, 1.2 μ m, 0.8 μ m and 0.6 μ m, respectively.

13 (Currently amended) The device of claim 2 wherein the membranes are presented in a row and column arrangements, each row comprising a particular substrate and each column comprising a different membrane filter.

14. (Currently amended) A method for ~~characterizing~~ detecting and identifying bacteria using a device comprising a porous body having regions of differing pore size, said regions being associated with different chromogens specific to enzymes produced by microorganisms, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

a) applying a solution containing bacteria to the porous body ~~in~~ at a region having a largest pore size,

b) allowing the solution to wick through the porous body,

c) allowing ~~leaving~~ the device to develop in an incubator set to ~~to about a~~ temperature of about 37°C, and

assessing the colors developed on the device in order to ~~ascertain~~ identify the bacteria present.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the porous body comprises membranes impregnated with chromogens.
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16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the porous body comprises a plurality of membranes having differing pore sizes.
17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the pore sizes vary from 0.6 μ m to 3.5 μ m.
18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the membranes are cellulose membranes.
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the chromogens are specific to different enzymes.
20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the chromogens impart a characteristic color to different bacterial colonies.